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                      UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
                     NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
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     In Re:
                                     ) Case No. 19-30088
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                                       Chapter 11
 5
     PG&E CORPORATION AND PACIFIC
     GAS AND ELECTRIC COMPANY
                                       San Francisco, California
                                       Tuesday, January 9, 2024
 6
                                       10:00 AM
                          Debtor.
 7
                                       STATUS CONFERENCE REGARDING
 8
                                       SECOND MOTION FOR PARTIAL
                                       SUMMARY JUDGMENT OF ISSUES IN
 9
                                       REORGANIZED DEBTOR'S
                                       OBJECTION TO CLAIM #2090 AND
10
                                       CLAIMANT'S RESPONSE THERETO
                                       FILED BY AMIR SHAHMIRZA
                                       [14007]
11
12
                        TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS
                   BEFORE THE HONORABLE DENNIS MONTALI
13
                      UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY JUDGE
    APPEARANCES (All present by video or telephone):
14
    For the Reorganized
                                 STEVEN A. LAMB, ESQ.
15
    Debtors:
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                                 Amir Shahmirza, Claimant
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    Also Present:
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    Court Recorder:
                                  LORENA PARADA/ANKEY THOMAS
                                  United States Bankruptcy Court
19
                                  450 Golden Gate Avenue
                                  San Francisco, CA 94102
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21
    Transcriber:
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    Proceedings recorded by electronic sound recording;
    transcript provided by transcription service.
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|----|---|
| 1  | SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, TUESDAY, JANUARY 9, 2024, 10:00 AM |
| 2  | -000-   |
| 3  | (Call to order of the Court.)                                 |
| 4  | THE CLERK: Court is now in session, the Honorable             |
| 5  | Dennis Montali presiding, calling the matter of PG&E          |
| 6  | Corporation.  |
| 7  | THE COURT: All right. Good morning. Appearances,              |
| 8  | please.   |
| 9  | Mr. Jacobson, good morning.                                   |
| 10 | MR. JACOBSON: Yes. Good morning, Your Honor.                  |
| 11 | Lawrence Jacobson, appearing for claimant, Komir, Inc. Amir   |
| 12 | Shahmirza is present here with me. He can see the screen, but |
| 13 | he is off camera.   |
| 14 | THE COURT: All right. Thank you.                              |
| 15 | Mr. Lamb?   |
| 16 | MR. LAMB: Good morning, Your Honor. Steve Lamb for            |
| 17 | the reorganized debtors.                                      |
| 18 | THE COURT: And Mr. Rupp?                                      |
| 19 | MR. RUPP: Good morning, Your Honor. Thomas Rupp, of           |
| 20 | Keller Benvenutti Kim, on behalf of the reorganized debtors.  |
| 21 | THE COURT: So as I've stated in my docket text order          |
| 22 | of December 26th, I've decided to deny the Shahmirza/Komir    |
| 23 | second motion for summary judgment at docket 14007 for the    |
| 24 | reasons that I will explain in this oral ruling.              |
| 25 | By way of introduction, I repeat verbatim what was set        |

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forth in and is the issue presented by the second motion: 1 2 "PG&E never paid any real property taxes assessed against the 3 property. Komir paid all the real property taxes. These facts alone warrant the granting of summary judgment number two. 4 Moreover, PG&E's use of the space occupied by the original 5 transmission lines was permissive, which precludes the 6 7 establishment of any prescriptive rights. PG&E did not occupy 8 the property under any adverse claim for five-years. 9 Therefore, the requisite five-year period could not have expired between the initiation of any nonconsensual possession 10 and the filing of the state court lawsuit. For each of the 11 separate foregoing reasons, PG&E has no prescriptive rights. 12 The Court's order granting this motion for partial summary 13 judgment is not only appropriate, in view of the facts and the 14 15 law set forth above, but is the fair and just result as PG&E acted unilaterally and proceeded over the objections of the 16 owner with no regard for the owner or its rights by using the 17 18 230 kV lines to service all of the customers to whom PG&E sold the power delivered across claimant's property presumably to 19 20 the airport and to the northern peninsula of San Francisco." 21 To begin with the explanation of my ruling, however, I 22 need to clarify a statement made in my June 12th, 2023, 23 memorandum decision on the first motion for summary judgment, 24 docket 13832. 25 In that decision, I rejected PG&E's counter-motion for

summary judgment because the thrust of its argument leading up to that decision, and thus my own reasoning, was that it held a prescriptive easement over the property for decades. I complained that the argument overlooked the reality of the movement of the towers and the slight lowering of the lines in 2018 and pointed out that the Komir lawsuit was based upon the change of use and the rights that were established well before the five-year period for prescriptive easement to be established.

The briefing for the second motion, the arguments, and the evidence, and in particular the declaration of Melanie M. Brayton, formerly Melanie M. Hildebrand, focused on Komir's consent by acquiescence, between 2000 and 2018, which it contends is not therefore an easement by prescription.

It was my understanding that the state of affairs prior to 2018 were not in play and there was no need to focus on whether PG&E's rights, going back decades, were established by a consensual easement, a prescriptive easement, or some other operation of law, but not the events described in the briefing on the first motion and dealt with by the first portion of my June 12th, 2023 memorandum decision, namely the elimination of the recorded easement.

It is only upon the further arguments in the second motion that I now understand that PG&E's statute-of-limitations argument pertains to events that happened decades earlier.

That is the background for my decision today, namely that it is simply the change of circumstances in 2018 that give Komir any basis to complain and PG&E the right to uphold its present position.

Further, as my explanation that follows should make clear, the matters raised by Komir in its January 3rd, 2024 ex parte motion, document docket 14253, are duplicative of matters I have resolved. In fact, I made the decision before Komir made that filing and only deferred it until now to take time to explain my reasoning more fully. Thus, the ex-parte motion will be denied as unnecessary.

Komir built its entire argument around the principle that's established in the Hansen v. Sandridge Partners opinion at 22 Cal.App.5th 1020. The Court of Appeals held that when someone in Hansen's position, the alleged dominant estate, here PG&E's position, the dominant estate, purports to obtain the fruits of adverse possession by exclusively occupying the affected property, to the exclusion of complete use by a disputed owner, the subservient estate -- in that case, Sandridge; in this case, Komir -- it must also have paid the real property taxes.

In short, the reason is that, when under certain nonexclusive circumstances, a party might obtain an easement, in fact, when its occupation might create the equivalent of an estate, it triggers the obligation to pay the taxes.

For several reasons, the Hansen case is simply not on point and in fact is demonstrably distinguishable. For openers, the Court's principal analysis and reasoning begins with the discussion of equitable easements, none of which is relevant to any component of the dispute between Komir and PG&E.

After a brief summary of the factual history, the court turns to its analysis, and the discussion in the opening paragraph reads, "The Hansens are not entitled to an equitable easement". Then the court opinion proceeds with a summary of the law of equitable easements, and after pointing out the standard of review, it applies that law to the facts and then asserts two critical facts: Hansens negligently encroached; and Sandridge, the neighbor, was not contributorily negligent.

After further discussion, it finally deals with prescriptive easements and rejects the Hansen cross-appeal. The decision does contain a useful and helpful tutorial on the difference between estates, namely, ownership interests, that are or may become possessory, and easement incorporeal interests that are less than the right of ownership.

And the following quote from that case is dispositive here. And this is, again, a direct quote. "The Hansens counter that all easements involve use of another's property that cannot be interfered with by the owner. But that does not mean that all easements are the practical equivalent of an

estate. For example, consider an easement for a road across the property of another. The Hansens observe that such easements necessarily prevent servient landowner from farming its property under the road, storing material in the roadway, or building a structure on the roadway. But the servient lender would still be able to drive on the road. Such nonexclusive easements do not create the same problem that arises when a purported easement prevents the servient tenement landowner from using the land for any practical purpose."

Citations omitted and a quote.

Thus the analysis that contrasts the circumstances of a prescriptive easement, or any other type of easement, and whether it morphs into an estate are simply not supported by the facts of the Hansen case.

A further distinction comes from the fact that Hansen acted negligently when it planted the trees and installed the irrigation system. And in fact, in summarizing this discussion, the court pointed out that Erik Hansen did not know that the lot line at issue involved disputed land, suggesting that its encroachment was not intentional but did not settle the issue of negligence.

The court added that Mr. Hansen did not know where the lot line adjustment was, and that is why he was negligent in planting a permanent crop without determining where the lot line was located.

Here there is simply no suggestion that PG&E acted wrongfully. There is no comparison between a ten-acre pistachio tree orchard, that has no other use or access across it, with no power lines over it, with Komir's two-acre commercial property that has a pumping station on it, power lines over it for decades, and on which the owner, Komir, has leased the very property to PG&E, on occasion, over the years, from time to time, since it acquired the property.

Add to that the fact that, in 2014, the San Mateo Superior Court, in an action brought by Komir against the County Flood Control District, overruled Komir's challenge based upon a statute of limitations, and further upheld the prescriptive easement, but at the same time awarded a nominal amount of money to Komir for an unlawful expansion of that easement by two lengths of fence enclosing 100 square feet of the plaintiff's property.

Again, while the recovery is nominal, it was measurable in dollars and more closely resembles the cases cited in Hansen, such as Warsaw and MacDonald Properties, both of which turned on an exception when the easement is nonexclusive and the subservient landowner shares the benefit of the easement.

Here the power lines did not exclude Komir from maintaining the pumping station on its property, maintaining through the district, or to be compensated for the pumping

irrigation district's placement of the unauthorized fences. Nor is there any evidence about the power lines interfering with other uses of the property beyond Komir's aspirational intention to have a multi-story building constructed on the property. That situation is either as it existed for decades or had been slightly altered in 2018.

Finally, Komir argues that nothing about any change in direction of the transmission lines or their height is relevant to the second motion for summary judgment. The Court agrees that those require a factual determination, and such determination would not be appropriate on this motion.

The only matter for this action is the now denied second motion for summary judgment framed in the way I described at the outset of this ruling. Thus, the matters raised in the ex parte motion are for another day.

That being said, it appears from the briefing that the burden is on the subservient tenement here, Komir, to prove that the repositioning of the line's height establishes its damages. That, again, is for trial.

In that regard, the Court notes that in PG&E's opposition to the motion, docket 14111, there is a discrepancy between the statement at page 3, line 22, that the lines were "raised slightly by 4.9 feet", and a statement, at page 9, line 21, that the conduction lines were, "lowered by 4.9 feet".

Komir's state court complaint filed on November 29th,

2018, is premised on Komir's belief that the lowering was allegedly eleven feet and said nothing about any repositioning of the lines. In contrast, the Raines declaration, document 14116, suggests a 4.9-foot lowering, beginning at the northern boundary of the Komir property, and tapering down to no change at the height that appears to be near the center, where Raines described the sag in the power line at maximum temperature.

These observations are nothing more than that and are not relevant to today's decision. However, if this matter goes to trial -- and on the factual question it is worth pointing out that the parties that Komir -- excuse me -- pointing out to the parties that Komir's evidence of an eleven-foot decrease is barely credible, and the Raines' evidence appears to be virtually dispositive on that specific issue.

In summary, PG&E's conduct, vis-a-vis Komir and the 2018 changes at the property, have no similarity to the knowing and negligent conduct of Hansen that deprived the adjacent owner of virtually any meaningful use of the property in that case.

Here, at best, there is a slight decrease in the height of a portion of the power lines that run north and south from the property line and perhaps give rise to some modest trespass damages, if any. There is no need to act on the competing evidentiary objections because the decision made here is purely one of law. The history of how the easement came to

be is of no consequence.

The declaration of Ms. Brayton is consistent with the absence of any consent by her or her late husband. But there is no evidence to indicate how before that easement came to be established -- how or before that easement came to be established, nor does it matter. What is relevant here is that, from 2000 forward, Komir acquiesced in the existing easement.

So call it consensual, if you will, but it took no action to do anything about it, and thus, to the extent that the easement was established sometime prior, the statute of limitations of three years would preclude any action. But since Komir only acted when there was a change in 2018, there's nothing to implicate any statute of limitations, but merely the question of whether the slight adjustment in height at one end of the property gave rise to any measurable damage based upon the theory of trespass.

The events of 2018, however characterized, did not eliminate the easement rights PG&E enjoyed and utilized for decades. That will be dealt with at trial if the parties do not finally settle this case.

Stated differently, Mr. Shahmirza stated that he withdrew his consent when the power lines were moved in 2018, but the removal of his consent was irrelevant. The easement was established long before Mr. Shahmirza ever bought the

property, and therefore to withdraw consent was a nullity, because the consent was not relevant in the first place. It was, again, I'll repeat, only the change in 2018 that might have created a trespass, but as I concluded from the evidence, did not constitute an abandonment or elimination of the easement that existed through the lines.

And again, the notion that power lines across and over property create a separate measurable parcel, and to compare it with the ten acres of pistachio trees in the country, is just simply a nonstarter. And there's no indication, as I stated previously, that the presence of the power lines took away various options available to Komir or Shahmirza for what was taking place on the ground.

For the foregoing reasons, the second motion will be denied and the Court will issue an order to that effect later today.

Counsel should meet and confer about what should come next. The Court will hold a status conference on January 24th, 2024, at 10 a.m., to discuss the future events left open for consideration after this ruling as contemplated in the stipulation of July 25th, 2023, document number 13920.

So that will conclude my ruling, and I don't want to take any further argument. Are there any questions?

Mr. Jacobson?

MR. JACOBSON: No, I would make comments, but I'm

understanding that those are not welcome at the moment.

THE COURT: Well, you can make a comment. I just don't want to take further argument. Make a comment. I'm not trying to silence you. I just -- I've made my decision, and it is my decision, but feel free to comment.

MR. JACOBSON: The issue started with the lowering of the lines. And as I'm understanding the ruling, the lowering of the lines and its effect is the issue now. But there is a crossover here, because I understand the Hansen case to talk about the exclusive use of the disputed space, not the ability of the owner to use the property for other purposes.

And both Brayton and Shahmirza have made their declarations that both intended to develop and construct. So that the lines not -- the use of the lines space is not only exclusive, but the placement of the lines adversely affects the use between the ground and the transmission towers.

And the evidence in the record is that neither Brayton nor Komir purchased this property to be farmers or miners or to park cars. So PG&E is profiting from all of the electricity that passes through. But neither Brayton nor Komir can use the space under the lines for their intended purpose. That's my comment.

THE COURT: My only response -- I'm not going to debate it. I'm simply recalling your argument before in your briefing. Again, I'm not criticizing you. You cast your fate

with the Hansen case, and you made me read the Hansen case, which, of course, is my responsibility. And I found the Hansen case to be fascinating, and thorough, and scholarly, but not on point, because I do not equate lines over property that has been used by third parties, by PG&E, by the irrigation district, by Komir leasing property on the ground to PG&E, I don't find that equivalent to occupying ten acres where you grow pistachio trees and there isn't even a road through it so that no other use is there.

Now, you want to do hypotheticals? What if somebody came along and put power lines over those pistachio trees?

Well, I'm not going to debate that because that isn't what happened. And what would happen if PG&E deactivated those lines across the Komir property and never earned a dollar from it; they just sat there and housed scarecrows or birds? I don't think it matters. The question is, is the air space occupied by three or -- excuse me -- six power lines exclusive for purposes of saying if the real property taxes aren't paid it's the equivalent of an estate. And I simply don't accept that.

So Mr. Lamb, any comments?

MR. LAMB: Your Honor, my only comment would be that my understanding is that we're trying to deal with some scheduling issues, which I appreciate. Hopefully we can come to some agreement before this January 24th conference. But we

have a deadline right now, based on a prior stipulation, on January 16th for expert depositions. And I believe opposing counsel has agreed that it should be extended to at least February 16th. I've asked for March 1st.

We should obviously meet and confer about further dates, but if we could at least agree on the record that that January 16th date isn't effective, then we can deal with that, I think, later at the January 24th conference.

THE COURT: Well, the January 24th conference was just picked as my next available PG&E date. I'm not wedded to that. My fervent hope is that maybe the parties will settle this case now, because I'm upset -- not upset personally, but I regret, for both sides, the staggering expense that has been gone to by both sides. And I don't take pleasure in telling Mr. Shahmirza that I don't think his theory is a winner, but that's my conclusion.

And therefore, to state it differently, I'm acknowledging that PG&E had rights, that something changed in 2018, but it didn't change in a way, in my mind, that somehow its easement was obliterated, and rather that there appears to be a slight change in the height, not even the angle, the height of the wires starting north of the property, but at least assuming dropping five feet as it crossed into Komir, and maybe to eight feet, or ten feet, or eleven feet, or some amount of feet. Again, there must be some measure to quantify

a trespass. And I don't know whether that's 500 dollars, or 500,000 dollars, or some other amount. But it would seem to me that, if one trespasses on one's property by altering something, that there should be some consequence.

So my hope is that maybe the parties will come to a consensual resolution. But if we have to have a trial about what are the monetary consequences of the ruling that I've made, we'll do it.

So I'll accommodate both of you and your own schedule. And I won't order anybody to mediation. I will just plead you to try to solve this problem so we don't have any further litigation over it. So there's nothing concrete about that date. I just picked it as the next date. I'll move it anywhere you want if that's the consensus of both sides that we do that.

MR. LAMB: And we will certainly meet and confer. And I think we've tentatively agreed on mediation, but we're still sorting out dates and we will work on that, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Yeah. I mean, look, I'm not asking Komir to throw in the towel if they believe my decision is wrong. If they wish to appeal my decision, they can do so. Of course they have a right to do that.

But my point is, I'm just taking what -- again, I compliment Mr. Jacobson for his research and focusing on that case. And I thought the case was a wonderful learning

you mess with your easement rights, you don't lose your easement, necessarily, but you might have to pay a trespass consequence. And to me, that's -- and the simple -- the most important lesson that I learned was what the superior court did in 2014. It said to the irrigation district, you guys didn't have the right to put those two fences up, and made them move two fences.

But those fences were on the Komir property. And so the court upheld the right for the irrigation district to have the pumping station there and just made it -- and I don't even know what the outcome was; I presume it was nominal.

So is it nominal to say to PG&E you shouldn't have lowered the wire five feet? Well, maybe it's nominal; maybe it's seven figures. I don't have any -- you know that I couldn't determine that on a motion for summary judgment. And it doesn't matter. There's no evidence of how we quantify it. So of course I'm keeping a neutral attitude about that. Okay.

MR. JACOBSON: That's all I ask. We look forward to the trial. We have seven or eight figure damage experts, so we will look forward to being in front of you and talking about that.

THE COURT: I look forward to approving a settlement.

But that's up to you and your client. So we'll see what

happens. And again, thank you for your time, and the time in

the briefing, and appreciate your participation on both sides.

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    Good job. And we'll conclude the hearing now at this point.
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    Thank you very much.
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              MR. LAMB: Thank you, Your Honor.
         (Whereupon these proceedings were concluded at 10:30 AM)
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eScribers, LLC

Case: 19-30088 Doc# 14264 Filed: 01/10/24 Entered: 01/10/24 09:06:33 Page 20 of 29

#### I N D E X

RULINGS:

Second Motion of Amir Shahmirza, Komir,

Inc. for partial summary judgment of
issues in reorganized debtor's objection to

Claim 2090 is denied.

#### CERTIFICATION

I, Sharona Shapiro, certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

Sharona Shapiro

/s/ SHARONA SHAPIRO, CET-492

eScribers

7227 N. 16th Street, Suite #207

Phoenix, AZ 85020

Date: January 10, 2024

| -  |   |  |  | • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •                 |
|--|---|--|--|---|
|  | 17:23;18:24;19:24   | argument (7)                           | 16:13,14;17:9,14;  | 16:18   |
|  | against (2)   | 5:1,4,25;6:12;                         | 19:25  | changes (1)   |
| $\mathbf{A}$   | 4:2;9:10  | 13:23;14:3,24                          | bought (1)   | 11:16   |
|  |   |  | 12:25  |   |
| abandonment (1)                                      | agree (1)   | arguments (2)                          |  | characterized (1)                                     |
| 13:5   | 16:6  | 5:10,23                                | boundary (1)   | 12:18   |
| ability (1)  | agreed (2)  | arises (1)                             | 11:5   | circumstances (3)                                     |
| 14:10  | 16:3;17:17  | 8:8                                    | <b>Brayton</b> (5)   | 6:2,23;8:11   |
| able (1)   | agreement (1)   | around (1)                             | 5:12;12:2;14:12,17,  | Citations (1)   |
| 8:6  | 15:25   | 6:12                                   | 20   | 8:10  |
| above (1)  | agrees (1)  | aspirational (1)                       | brief (1)  | cited (1)   |
| 4:15   | 10:9  | 10:3                                   | 7:7  | 9:19  |
| absence (1)  | ahead (1)   | asserts (1)                            | briefing (5)   | claim (1)   |
| 12:3   | 18:6  | 7:13                                   | 5:10,20;10:16;   | 4:8   |
| accept (2)   | air (1)   | assessed (1)                           | 14:25;19:25  | claimant (1)  |
| 15:19;18:24  | 15:16   | 4:2                                    | brought (1)  | 3:11  |
| access (1)   | airport (1)   | assuming (1)                           | 9:10   | claimant's (1)  |
| 9:3  | 4:20  | 16:23                                  | building (3)   | 4:19  |
| accommodate (1)                                      | alleged (1)   | attitude (1)                           | 8:5;10:4;18:12   | clarify (1)   |
| 17:9   | 6:15  | 19:17                                  | built (1)  | 4:22  |
| acknowledging (1)                                    | allegedly (1)   | available (2)                          | 6:12   | clear (1)   |
| 16:18  | 11:2  | 13:12;16:10                            | burden (1)   | 6:6   |
|  | alone (1)   | awarded (1)                            | 10:17  | CLERK (1)   |
| acquiesced (1)<br>12:7                               | 4:4   | 9:13                                   | 10.17  | 3:4   |
|  | along (1)   | away (1)                               | C  | client (1)  |
| acquiescence (1)                                     | 15:11   | 13:11                                  |  | 19:23   |
| 5:13   | alteration (1)  | 13.11                                  | CalApp5th (1)  | client's (1)  |
| acquired (1)   | 18:10   | В                                      | 6:14   | 18:18   |
| 9:8  |   | В                                      | CALIFORNIA (1)   | I I   |
| acres (2)  | altered (1)   | hash (1)                               |  | closely (1)   |
| 13:9;15:7  | 10:6  | back (1)                               | 3:1  | 9:18  |
| across (5)   | altering (1)  | 5:17                                   | Call (2)   | comment (6)   |
| 4:19;8:1;9:3;13:7;                                   | 17:3  | background (1)                         | 3:3;12:9   | 14:2,3,5,22;15:22;                                    |
| 15:14  | Amir (1)  | 6:1                                    | calling (1)  | 18:8  |
| act (1)  | 3:11  | barely (1)                             | 3:5  | comments (2)  |
| 11:23  | amount (4)  | 11:13                                  | came (4)   | 13:25;15:21   |
| acted (4)  | 9:14;16:25;17:2;  | based (4)                              | 11:25;12:4,5;15:11   | commercial (1)  |
| 4:16;8:16;9:1;                                       | 18:14   | 5:6;9:12;12:16;                        | camera (1)   | 9:5   |
| 12:13  | analysis (3)  | 16:1                                   | 3:13   | compare (1)   |
| action (4)   | 7:3,8;8:11  | basis (1)                              | can (8)  | 13:8  |
| 9:10;10:12;12:10,                                    | angle (1)   | 6:3                                    | 3:12;14:2,20;15:24;  | comparison (1)  |
| 12   | 16:21   | become (1)                             | 16:7;17:21;18:13,17  | 9:2   |
| Add (1)  | another's (1)   | 7:19                                   | cars (1)   | compensated (1)                                       |
| 9:9  | 7:23  | begin (1)                              | 14:19  | 9:25  |
| added (1)  | appeal (1)  | 4:21                                   | case (15)  | competing (1)   |
| 8:22   | 17:21   | beginning (1)                          | 6:19,20;7:1,21;  | 11:24   |
| adjacent (1)   | Appeals (1)   | 11:4                                   | 8:14;11:19;12:21;  | complain (1)  |
| 11:17  | 6:14  | begins (1)                             | 14:9;15:1,1,3;16:11;   | 6:3   |
| adjusted (1)   | Appearances (1)   | 7:3                                    | 17:25,25;18:25   | complained (1)  |
| 18:20  | 3:7   | behalf (1)                             | cases (1)  | 5:4   |
| adjustment (2)                                       | appearing (1)   | 3:20                                   | 9:18   | complaint (1)   |
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